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EXPECT 1948 HALIBUT SEASON TO BE SHORT ONE

The 1948 halibut season is expected to be one of the shortest on record, according to the Fish and Wildlife Service, although the catch is expected to be somewhat larger than last year.

Since May 1 vessels of the halibut fleet have been active in North Pacific waters and many excellent catches are now being delivered to western ports for shipment to markets widely distributed throughout the country.

The quantity of halibut that can be caught each year is set by international agreement between the United States and Canada. The 1948 quota is 54 million pounds. In 1947 the season opened on May 1 and the quota of 53 million pounds was reached on August 17. With more vessels engaged in the fishery this year, fishery experts believe that the quota from all areas may be attained by the end of July.

The season for Area 2, which includes coastal waters of the United States, British Columbia, and Alaska from Willapa Light to Cape Spencer will be closed at midnight June 1. The quota for this area is set at 25½ million pounds, 1 million pounds greater than 1947. This is the shortest halibut season in history for Area 2 and will have been only 32 days long as compared with 39 days in 1947 and 42 days in 1946.

Areas 3 and 4 which include that area west of Cape Spencer, have quotas to fill of 28 million and 1½ million pounds respectively.

The Pacific halibut is an example of a resource which, after undergoing extreme depletion, was restored through careful study and regulation. As a result of the intensive fishery between 1910 and 1930, stocks of halibut in the North Pacific decreased alarmingly. Since 1930, management of the fishery by the United States and Canada under mutual agreement has increased the abundance and stabilized the fishery at a relatively high level of production. The annual yield is now about 10 million pounds greater than under the unrestricted fishing immediately preceding regulation and perhaps 20 million pounds greater than had unrestricted fishing continued.

By way of contrast, the oldest halibut fishery in the United States, that of the North Atlantic banks, has declined from a former catch of around 14 million pounds to about 1 million pounds annually.

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